

**REMARKS**

The office action of December 29, 2005, has been carefully considered.

It is noted that the application is objected to for not containing section headings.

Claim 1 is objected to for containing various informalities.

Claims 1-4 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph.

Claim 1 is further rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) over JP 2000197953 in view of the patent to Teraoka et al.

Claim 2 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) over JP 2000197953 in view of Teraoka et al. and further in view of the patent to Kajiwara et al.

Claims 3 and 4 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) over JP 2000197953 in view of Teraoka et al. and further in view of the patent to Maebara et al.

In connection with the Examiner's objections to the application, applicant has amended the specification to include section headings.

In view of these considerations it is respectfully submitted that the objection to the application is overcome and should be withdrawn.

In view of the Examiner's rejections of the claims, applicant has amended claims 1-4.

It is respectfully submitted that the claims now on file particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. Applicant has amended the claims to address the instances of indefiniteness cited by the Examiner.

In view of these considerations it is respectfully submitted that the rejection of claims 1-4 under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph is overcome and should be withdrawn.

With the amendment to claim 1 it is further respectfully

submitted that the objection to this claim for containing informalities is overcome and should be withdrawn.

It is respectfully submitted that the claims presently on file differ essentially and in an unobvious, highly advantageous manner from the methods disclosed in the references.

Turning now to the references and particularly to JP 2000197953, it can be seen that this reference discloses a method for manufacturing continuously cast slab.

The patent to Teraoka et al. discloses an apparatus for producing a strip of stainless steel.

The Examiner combined these references in determining that claim 1 would be unpatentable over such a combination. The Japanese reference does not teach a method in which the inner zone 19, by heat treatment in a soaking furnace 40, leads to a completely recrystallized surface zone (19') of the slab. The Japanese reference does not show a soaking furnace as is used in the presently claimed invention. Teraoka et al. add nothing to the teachings of the Japanese reference so as to arrive at the presently claimed invention. Teraoka et al. teach the production

of stainless steel strip having a thickness of less than 10mm. As can be seen in Figs. 6A and 6B, the stainless steel strip with such a thickness exits the casting apparatus completely solidified, without a reducing stand arranged in the region of the casting apparatus for reducing the thickness of the strip. Such a deforming or reducing strand is, however present in the presently claimed invention. Furthermore, Teraoka et al have no teaching of a method in which the inner zone 19, by heat treatment in a soaking furnace 40, leads to a completely recrystallized surface zone (19') of the slab. Thus, a combination of these references cannot teach a method containing such a step.

In view of these considerations it is respectfully submitted that the rejection of claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) over a combination of the above-discussed references is overcome and should be withdrawn.

The patents to Kajiwara et al. and Maebara et al. have also been considered. Neither of these references add anything to the teachings of the previously discussed references so as to suggest the presently claimed invention.

In view of these considerations it is respectfully submitted

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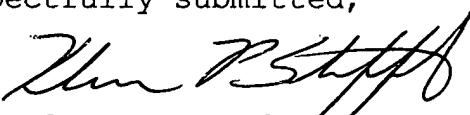
that the rejections of claims 2-4 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) are overcome and should be withdrawn.

Reconsideration and allowance of the present application are respectfully requested.

Any additional fees or charges required at this time in connection with this application may be charged to Patent and Trademark Office Deposit Account No. 11-1835.

Respectfully submitted,

By



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**CERTIFICATE OF MAILING**

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: Commissioner for Patents, PO Box 1450 Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, on March 29, 2006.

By:   
Klaus P. Stoffel

Date: March 29, 2006